

The Hague

1.

Dear Lila,

Of course I was delighted to receive your letter. Everybody will be very happy if you join the next pilgrimage which will be in two years. It is best to write now to Khun Sujin

so that you will be informed of all the details. But be prepared though to take hardships, India is not always comfortable. But if it is Dhamma all day you enjoy, then you will be all right.

My Letters the Hague are not meant to read through all at once, because then you might overlook the points about the practice I brought into each letter, and these points will answer some of your questions too.

Book II, Mental Development, page 96, the person who likes to know how nāmas and rūpas are related to each other, seems to say the same as you in your letter. And would you read my answer to this? Do you want to have a theoretical knowledge of all nāmas and rūpas, or do you want to develop the wisdom which knows by experience the characteristics of the phenomena appearing through the five senses and through the mind-door? There are different levels of wisdom and we should find out what kind of wisdom we are developing."

You have bought the complete Abhidhamma, are learning Pali, like to know the details of each cetasika, and you apply great energy to all this. But knowledge from books is not the same as knowledge from the right practice: which is: right awareness of the right object. And in order to understand the right practice listening to the right person is necessary. How do we know who is the right person? If listening to that person makes us less attached to the self, and if we can notice that the practice as explained by the right person clears up misunderstandings, such as: confusion ^(to) thinking about realities and right awareness of the right object. You considered going to Sri Lanka, but why not Bangkok, where Khun Sujin is? Phra Dhammakhano (Phra Alan) has a wonderful group of people around him now who discuss Dhamma every day in the Wat Phleng, they go and listen to Khun Sujin and perform many different kinds of kusala. You would enjoy this very much. Now it seems that you are expecting a quick result and you are disappointed that all the theoretical knowledge does not get you much further. Thus you can find out for yourself whether your practice is right or not.

Maybe you could check this: one day in Bangkok will get you much further than a lifetime of Bookstudy in the hills of California.

If you are coming to Holland to see your Dutch friend Miep I will be delighted to meet you.

We all confuse awareness with thinking about realities, or with knowledge acquired from books. Ever since India I understand this better than before, but I still confuse them. But it helps if one realises this. When there is sound or hearing, or hardness we tend to insert our knowledge acquired from previous study about realities, and we keep the (maybe very quick) thinking for the characteristic which appears. Thus, the object the citta experiences is still a concept, an idea, and not the characteristic of a reality. If there is hardness, there is only the hardness, not the hardness of my leg, or the hardness of the floor, then there would be concepts again instead of a reality. The hardness cannot hear, cannot see, it is only hardness, it is not your hardness, it does not belong to you. Since hardness appears, there must also be the experience of hardness. There is a reality which experiences hardness, not you who experiences hardness. The experience of hardness cannot see, cannot hear, cannot sit, it is not a person, not self. The hardness itself does not know anything, the experience of hardness "knows" something.

You write that you are aware of the different cetasikas, of akusala cittas, of kusala cittas. I used to think in the same line. But it is not awareness, only thinking, noticing, a self who notices. Awareness is a kind of nāma which only arises with a "beautiful citta" (sobhana citta), and awareness in vipassanā arises together with a citta which realises a characteristic of nāma or rūpa. It is not at all the same as 'observing', then there would be awareness every time we see, we hear. It is quite different.

The development of vipassanā is step by step and if you forego some steps, wrong practice again. The first step is: realising the difference between nāma and rūpa, not by thinking, not by naming, not by inserting your knowledge acquired from books, but by experience, which is acquired with a lot of patience, and you have to keep in mind not

to desire to know everything at once. Hardness should be realised (not by a self, not observed!) as only hardness and that is all. The experience of hardness should be realised as the experience of hardness, different from hardness. Same with sound, hearing, but there is no order in the objects of awareness, anything which appears. Not this one first than that one. Often there are misunderstandings about mahā-satipatthāna: absolutely no order, it depends on the sati of what there is awareness. The Buddha only showed by mahā-satipatthāna that everything is included, but people ^(misunderstand) it and they think: now today feelings, tomorrow cittas, that is wrong practice, not leading anywhere.

At first there was something in my mind: this is outrageous, I notice that there are kusala cittas and akusala cittas and could I not even realise their different characteristics?

I named them, inserted my own knowledge. But we have to accept that we are babies, only beginning. Now I try less to insert my theoretical knowledge. I had written in my books: do not confuse the two, but, as for the practice, unknowingly I still did. No, we do not know yet ^(what process is) the mind-door (nāma has not appeared as nāma yet, thus there is still doubt about the difference between nāma and rūpa. All that can be done: know that clinging is the greatest enemy, desire to know this or that. Then there are realities appearing, there can be awareness, but do not try to overstretch. And then we notice that the less there is the trying, more characteristics just appear.

When it is realised when an object like sound is experienced through the sense-door and when through the mind-door the doubt about the mind-door disappears, but know: this is a long, long way off, a lot of patient practice is needed in our daily life, not by sitting and 'observing'. Khun Sujin always stresses: the object has to be right, right, right.

If there is no right practice which has to lead to first just knowing that hearing has a characteristic different from sound, hardness, different from the experience of hardness, what is the use of all your Pali study and book study? And why do you learn Pali? Khun Sujin does not have a Pali class. The Pali terms are used in Abhidhamma because the translations are confusing. I have two simple books from Sri Lanka: The New Pali Course, A.P. Buddhadatta Thera, but Book II is very hard. And ask yourselves: why do you like to do it?

The purpose of my Abhidhamma Notes is to clear up misunderstandings about realities and to help people to have some foundation knowledge for the practice. But if one studies all about the Paṭicca Samuppāda (dependant origination) and wants to experience it in daily life at once, impossible.

← Certainly, conditions for realities can later on be realised by paññā (not by a self who studies). But that is quite different from knowing all this in theory. The same for the arising and falling away: a later step. Impossible if first not is realised the difference between nāma and rūpa. You might think: it falls away, but that is thinking by deduction.

Now more points in your letter: the truth of anattā can only be seen when we have attained enlightenment. That akusala cittas slip in, we can notice, but it is by thinking about them when they have fallen away already, because there cannot be awareness right of their characteristic if we do not know the difference between nāma and rūpa. Another example to illustrate this: you might think: feeling is easy, you can notice pleasant feeling. However, there are both nāma and rūpa, and where is the nāma and where is the rūpa? We mix them, seem to notice both and when we notice both it shows there is no awareness. (Same for hearing and sound: if we notice both: no awareness of any characteristic of reality.) I am not trying to discourage you, but it helps to start from the beginning and not to think we know already what we do not know yet, as we are all inclined to do, led as we are by our desire.

You try to be aware of akusala cetasikas when they enter through the mind-door: what is it, awareness of the right object, or thinking of minddoor, thinking of this or that cetasika and naming them? You say: just in being aware of akusala it slips away and kusala grows. Let us be very careful here and not delude ourselves. By thinking of something else, there cannot be the akusala moment of before for a little while, but the first aim of vipassanā is not suppressing akusala, but eradicating the wrong view of self (diṭṭhi). If diṭṭhi is not eradicated, the other kinds of akusala will not be eradicated, and all the time there is the idea of self which thinks of kusala and suppresses akusala. And what about moha? We may think that we have worked away akusala, but moha, ignorance, accompanied by neutral feeling is bound to appear, but we do not notice it.

When there is no awareness, there are all kinds of akusala bound to arise: but not ditthi (wrong view) all the time. However it is a latent tendency, accumulated in every citta, until one is sotapanna. Ditthi are all kinds of wrong views, such as : no kamma and vipāka, the belief in a self, wrong practice is also ditthi. You ask: is ditthi present each time I am not fully aware of what I am doing. From your question it appears that you think that sati is: fully aware of what one is doing, like observing. This is not the characteristic of sati. See above. Fully aware of what one is doing: a big self again. And what means doing? There are only phenomena, nāma and rūpa. Having attention on reading, on eating: this is not the characteristic of sati. There is sati: when hardness is just realised as only hardness, no you who is doing this or that. Eating: there is softness, hardness, motion, pressure, lobha, phenomena appearing one at a time through different doorways. One can think of eating, but not be aware of eating, ^{eating} is only a conventional term. Maybe it would be helpful to reread Abhidhamma on Paramattha dhammas.

To finish a few questions you may like to answer and then I can see whether it helped you what I wrote or whether I have to stress more points.

1. I am walking and try to concentrate on walking. Is that sati ?
2. Akusala cittas are different from kusala cittas and we notice that, Is that right awareness?
3. Is sound included in the mahā-satipatthāna?
4. What does it mean: knowing the difference between nāma and rūpa. ^{Between which} nāmas and which rūpas should ← the difference be known?

5. What is the condition for right awareness, only book study, or what else?

6. How can one check one is listening to the right person?

7. What happens if we listen to the wrong practice? Does it have any effects on us? Are we influenced (maybe unknowingly) by what we hear?

8. Can sati be induced, can conditions be created for sati to arise?

9. Some days there is more awareness of the right object, some much less. What is the cause of that? What hinders it most?

10. What is the right object of awareness?

11. What is the difference between thinking of sound and awareness of sound?